A SUNSET IDYL

AND OTHER POEMS

EBEN JENKS LOOMIS

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A SUNSET IDYL

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

EBEN JENKS LOOMIS

CAMBRIDGE
Printed at the Riverside Press
1903

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TO MY WI

1853 - 1903

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
A Sunset Idyl	1
The Trailing Arbutus	12
The Setting Venus	14
A Legend of the Water-Lily	17
My Dream	23
Aspiration	25
A Sunset Picture	27
To Collette	29
To an Autumn Violet	32
The Caged Mocking-Bird's Song	34
Song	37
My Friend	39
Dripping Spring	42
Death. A Vision	44
Autumn Signs	49
The Gift	51
The Heart's Winter	54
1888–1889	58
The Deserted House	61

Three Gifts 64
Questionings 65
Meridian Hill 69
To a Forest Spring 71
The Cosmic Morning 72
Anacreontic 76
A Summer Sunrise 77
A Winter Sunset 79
A Reminiscence 82
Reaching 85
Do You Remember? 88
Trysting 90
"Through the City's Ceaseless Noise" 92
The Brook 94
"As Two Dewdrops on a Flower" 96
Phantoms 98
"Was it June?" 100
"I crossed" 102
Friendship 105
Who is my Neighbor? 106
Parted 108

SONNETS

Waiting 113
Sunset 114
At Night 115
A Forest Walk 116, 117

Distant Mountains *118, 119*
The Pine *120, 121*
The Crow *122, 123*
Indian Summer *124, 125*
Twilight on Lake George *126, 127*
"I stand upon the hill: far, far, away" *128*
Progress *129*

A SUNSET IDYL

ALL day the drifting clouds had trailed along
Their gray, cool wreaths of mist athwart the hills;
All day the gentle rain with whispering voice
Had seemed to tell some secret of the clouds,
And the hushed earth had listened all day long
To catch the story from the sky-born rain.
Once only waked the thunder and the wind:
In the black west a mighty cloud uprose,
And from the lurid purple of its mane
Shook down the rain and thunder to the earth,
And the quick lightning shivering through the gloom
Flashed like a sudden meteor in the night.
But when the dark, still day was nearly spent,
The yellow sunshine flooded all the west,
The broken clouds swept eastward, and the night
Came up, mysterious with its countless stars.
Before the rain had ceased, or day had gone,
I stood upon a bridge whose sturdy arch
Spans the broad river's deep, tumultuous flood,
And this is what I saw, and heard, and dreamed.

Far westward lie
Along the sky
Vast clouds of sombre, purple dye;
On slope and hill
The wind is still,
The brooding air grows damp and chill.
Dark shadows creep
From vale to steep,
The threatening silence grows more deep;
While far away
A drifting spray
Wraps all the distant hills in gray.
A low, deep groan,
A swelling moan,
The storm's majestic monotone,
Breaks on the ear,
And growing clear,
Brings to the heart a chill of fear.
A blinding flash,
A bursting crash,
Join with the white rain's sweeping dash.
The winds awake
And wildly shake
The forest till its strong roots quake.
The turbid rills
Leap from the hills,
Their voice the thunder pauses fills;

Along the stream
A snowy gleam
Flashes like waves seen in a dream.
The storm's dark fold
Is upward rolled
And brightens into vapory gold;
The winds are whist,
And on the mist
A rainbow keeps with eve its tryst.

The wind fell silent; in the tender west
A few low clouds glowed with intensest light,
Crimson, and amethyst, and changing gold.
The river flowed like liquid chrysoprase;
Flakes of white foam ran whirling on the green,
And while the current hastened toward the sea,
My thought went drifting like the snowy foam,
Down to a shoreless sea of reverie,
And dreamed of things that were not, nor would be.

. . . . . .

A high, bare hill crowned by a noble oak;
A house below half hidden by the trees;
Broad fields of sunny green, a winding stream;
Ranges of hills on the horizon's rim
Melt blue and bluer to the distant sky.
Of all the quiet scene, the house below

Was sweetest to my soul ; for there dwelt one
Who ruled my spirit with the rule of love.
A subtle power had led my heart along
Step after step, and yet I knew it not ;
For I had often met her ; laugh and jest
Passed lightly like the passing summer hours ;
And though I saw her beauty, yet my heart
Was still untouched. Her heavy, rich brown hair,
Shot through by sunshine with a ray of gold,
Lay in great masses on her shapely head,
A coil of shadowy sunbeams, silky fine.
Through large, soft hazel eyes her soul looked out
When she was quiet, but if she was moved
The hazel fire dissolved in darkest night,
And from that darkness half discovered thoughts
Peered out, as misty stars peer from the sky.
I knew not that I loved her, till one eve
As she came toward me down the garden walk,
A glory like the aureole of a saint
Shone round her lovely head, — or seemed to shine, —
And by a sudden wave of chilling fear
Which swept across my newly conscious heart,
That she could never love me in return,
I knew she held my life ; my own no more.
But when one evening from her shy, sweet lips
I heard the sweetest words the air can hold,
Earth seemed once more a sinless Paradise,

Where angels might not fear again to dwell,
And talk with men beneath the noonday shade.
Sometimes at sunset, on the high, green hill,
When all the west flamed with the sun's last fire,
I stayed for her beneath the murmuring oak,
And watched her coming up the winding path.

When the sun is red and low
Up the path I wander slow;
To my happy tryst I go
While the evening breezes blow,
And the vesper sparrow sings.
Where the hilltop, cool and high,
Seems to touch the glowing sky,
On the tender turf I lie,
Watching crimson clouds go by,
And the night-hawk's spotted wings.
Far below, the babbling rill
Sends its murmur to the hill,
And the evening breeze grows still —
Suddenly my pulses thrill
With an ecstasy like pain,
For adown the path I see,
Hidden half by vine and tree,
Where my darling comes to me,
Tripping o'er the shadowy lea;
Life and joy have come again.

I can hear her flying feet
Bending down the clover sweet;
Ere my heart again can beat
With my soul my soul shall meet;
Life to me no more can bring.
Love thoughts warm her forehead white,
Flushing her sweet face with light;
Hill and vale again grow bright,
Though the sun has gone from sight;
With her come the day and spring.
All of midday's sunshine fair
Lingers in her golden hair;
Thrilling bird songs, sweet and rare,
Seem to stir the scented air,
As her whispered words I list.
O my darling, should the years
Bring us suffering, bring us tears,
Even while death's shadow nears,
We shall think amid our fears
Of this happy, sunset tryst.

. . . . . .

The last thin wreath of vapor in the west
Burned for an instant like a rosy flame,
Then melted into air, and left the sky
A broad, bright field of topaz, from whose glow
Almost it seemed the crystal walls of Heaven
Flashed down to earth the light of purer skies.

Across the river, from the dripping copse
Came faintly to the ear the sparrow's song,
The day's last pulse of music; then a spell
Of silence fell upon the tired earth,
And, save the whispering murmur of the stream,
When tiny wavelets lapped the granite piers,
No noises stirred the sunset-holding air,
But like God's benediction, perfect peace
Wrapped everything in rest, from flower to man.
The day's last flame, uplifted from the earth,
Filled the great purple goblet of the sky
With sunset wine. With pale and trembling lips
I quaffed this vintage of the vines of God,
And sin's dark shadow seemed to leave my soul,
And gross material things grow pure and fine.
And as I gazed upon the glowing west,
Which slowly darkened with the coming night,
Again sweet visions of unreal bliss
Made grief and pain to seem but flitting shades
Which hid themselves from the broad sun of joy.

. . . . . .

I bore her to my home. It cannot be
That greater joy and peace than mine have shone
Into the depths of any mortal life.
How strange it seemed to me that my great love
Could grow still stronger with the passing years.
But all my being, from that bright, sweet day

When first I knew her maiden heart was mine,
Was filled and lifted by her purer life.
Infinite changes in her coy, sweet ways
Made her forever different, though the same.
To-day it seemed no added grace could give
A fuller beauty to her rounded life;
Yet on the morrow some new witching charm
Made her still lovelier than yesterday.
One soft June evening, when the western sky
Held lovingly a few warm rays of light
Though day had long departed, she and I
Walked slowly through the garden and beyond,
To a great pine whose cone of plumy green
In the dim light gloomed like a threatening cloud.
A wave of dewy air breathed from the west
And, toying with the myriad-needled pine,
Broke in a low sweet pulse of dream-like song.
Our hearts were thrilled with a diviner life
In the deep, starry silence; made more deep
By the faint wind-song from the shadowy tree.
Then, when the stillness pressed our throbbing hearts,
Until the quiet grew almost to pain,
Some thought too deep for words alone to speak,
Sprang to her lips in a low gush of song.

Noble pine tree, softly singing,
To my heart wild fancies bringing,

Speak thy wisdom plainer, clearer,
Bring my life to thy life nearer,
Tell me, is not love undying,
Change, and time, and fate defying?
With thy song these words are blending,
Love alone is never ending.

Gentle west wind, whose caressing
Brings the earth continual blessing,
What is thy soft murmur saying?
Does it answer to my praying?
Sayst thou not that love, immortal,
Lives beyond the shadowy portal?
With thy voice these words are blending,
Love alone is never ending.

Silver stars, thy changeless glory
Shows me love's unchanging story,
Always shines it true and tender,
As thy white, eternal splendor;
Time nor death shall touch it ever,
True hearts joined are one forever,
Heaven itself this truth is sending,
Love alone is never ending.

Summer night, thrilled through with brightness
By the stars' unsullied whiteness,

In your gloom, by starlight broken,
I can see love's radiant token;
Through life's gloom, if gloom shall near us,
Love light still shall ever cheer us.
Night and stars this truth are sending,
Love alone is never ending.

. . . . . .

As in an autumn morning when a mist
Wraps all things in a veil of ghostly white,
Through which familiar scenes look strange and new,
So through the glamour of my sunset dream
I saw familiar things shine sweet and strange;
The world seemed filled with fair, unreal shapes,
Such as our daily life can never know.
And as the morning mist, warmed by the sun,
Lifts suddenly and vanishes away,
So my fair dream, touched by a sudden sound
Borne from the distant town across the stream,
Broke in an instant, and its lovely forms,
Its sunny landscapes and ideal love,
Rose like a mist and vanished in the night.
No light of sunset lingered in the west,
But only darkness lit by trembling stars.
The sighing river swept in gloom away
As if in sadness for my broken dream,
Yet bore it ever, through the deepening night,
The sparkling stars upon its panting breast.

I wended slowly homeward, and my heart
Seemed moving, like the river, into gloom ;
But not unbroken gloom, for starlike thoughts,
The scattered fragments of my twilight dream,
Shone out to lead me toward the coming morn.
And night was still and starry. But the day,
Which fills the heart with new and hopeful light,
Still came not, for the hour was not yet ripe.
But — for God changes not — the morn shall come.

THE TRAILING ARBUTUS

DIVINELY fair, thy waxen cup
From sodden forest leaves looks up,
Pure as an infant's dimpled face,
And with an infant's fragile grace.
Thy goblets, fit for fairy wine,
With rosy sunlight seem to shine,
And to my waiting heart they bring
A prophecy of coming spring.
From dripping mould and perished leaves
Mysterious life thy beauty weaves,
And sets thee on the woodland slope
To give the winter-weary hope.
What is thy wondrous alchemy
Transmuting clay to roseate dye?
Which finds in every wind that blows
A perfume sweeter than the rose?
I would that I could learn such skill
To mould existence to my will;
To take some tint of heavenly sky
From common life where dead hopes lie;

And gain from sorrow's frosty wings
The fragrance of diviner things.
How can I live a life like thine,
Fill up my soul with life's best wine,
Walk stainless through the foulest way,
And keep Hope's light though dark the day ?
I know not. But thy tender grace
In memory shall keep its place,
And over wintry thoughts shall bring
A brightness like the glow of spring.

THE SETTING VENUS

(Written Two Weeks before the Transit of 1874)

NOT a wreath of cloudy vapor stains the glory of the sky,
Basking in the latest sun-rays all the distant hilltops lie;
From beyond the far horizon flashes up a radiance, bright
As the glow which sprang from chaos at the words "Let there be light."
Slowly fades the sunny brightness, sombre shadows creep and grow,
From the east a purple darkness climbs the concave, still and slow;
All the light of sunset gathers low along the amber west,
All the discords born of daylight, awed by evening, drop to rest.
Like a newer revelation, like another birth of light,
Flashes out the evening planet through the growing dusk of night;
All the western sky seems holy, lighted by that spotless ray;

Night, illumined by that glory, whiter than the whitest day.
Ah ! as earth's celestial sister, later born and doubly fair,
Moves along her radiant pathway with the sunlight in her hair,
Only pale, prophetic science can foretell that day so nigh,
When her beauty, turned to darkness, shall be lost in yonder sky.
Blinded, hidden by the lightning of the sun's supernal might,
Wanders on the darkening planet, darker as it nears the light :
Who will now praise earth's young sister, robed in blackness like a nun,
All her glow a spot of darkness on the splendor of the sun?
Yet from her humiliation comes her glory, greater far
Than shall wait on other planet, moon, or farthest shining star.
Through the sun's Red Sea her going shall be watched by eager eyes,
Step by step along her pathway where the clouds of flame arise.
Not her most unclouded beauty drew such worship to her throne,
As her day of darkened brightness, as this hour of gloom alone.
Slowly, sadly, yet triumphant, from that death to newer birth,

Moves through dawn victorious Venus as the morning star
of earth.
From her martyrdom of darkness, science grasps the law
of space,
Learns to weigh the worlds around us, and their paths
unerring trace;
Finds the point where the Creator holds Attraction's golden
chain,
Drawing worlds and suns through ether, in one vast, har-
monic train.

A LEGEND OF THE WATER-LILY

NO brighter maid danced on the green than Margaret the Fair,
Her soul looked out through eyes of blue, of rippled gold her hair;
Her face was sweet with pensive thought; no maid so fair, I ween,
Was ever found the country round, or, sooth, was ever seen.
Long had young Harold told his love; she said him yea nor nay:
"I wed no man whose life is spent with churls in rustic play,
But he alone may claim my love who wins a warrior's fame;
Not he who leads a village life and never makes a name."
"And if I come from foreign wars, where death and brave men meet,
And lay my laurels and my heart," said Harold, "at your feet;
If ere I come you hear my name spoke by both great and small,

By village rustic in his cot, by noble in the hall, —
Then should I vainly seek your love; as vainly as of old?"
"Come then to me," said Margaret, "and Harold shall be told."
He put upon her dainty hand a ring whose opal stone
Flashed like a scarlet flame through smoke, and then she was alone.
A year has passed, he comes not yet; another year goes by,
All pale and sad is Margaret, the light has left her eye;
She does not hear young Harold's name spoke, or by great or small,
By village rustic in his cot or noble in the hall.
Then thought she of an olden tale, told oft in twilight gray,
Of haunted streams where Nixies dwell and dance the night away;
How, when the night is dark and still, is seen a sudden light
Far down below the quiet wave, a flash that startles night,
And torches countless as the stars break from the silent stream,
And dancers featly tread the wave beneath that ruddy gleam.
And he whose heart is strong and bold, nor fears their magic power,
May questions three demand of them, just at the midnight hour.

But he who seeks their aid must have a steady heart and bold,
He must not take their jewels rich, he must refuse their gold;
For they will offer precious stones and gold a countless store,
But if he take the proffered wealth, no friend shall see him more.
For snatched away from sun and sky, enforced by demon spell,
A servant threescore years and five, with Nixies must he dwell.
And if his heart, assailed by fear, within his breast grow faint,
Should he forget to sign the cross, and call on holy saint,
Should he not cry aloud on Christ to help him in his need,
Then woe for him! through weary years sad fate shall be his meed.
For if he do not call on Christ, nor cross his sinful breast,
Nor speak the Virgin Mother's name, feared by the powers unblest,
They have the power by spell to change, for threescore years and five,
His form of man to beast or flower, nor prayer can break the gyve.

Down among the trembling rushes,
While the sky with twilight flushes,
And the landscape slowly darkens,
Margaret intently harkens.
Through the dark the stream flows gently,
And she watches it intently;
Gone is all the twilight splendor,
Pure stars sparkle white and tender;
On the hill a soft wind blowing,
Answers to the river's flowing.
As the midnight hour draws nigher,
Comes a flash of blood-red fire;
Deep beneath the flowing river
Torches gleam and lances quiver.
On the beryl water dancing,
Tresses flowing, jewels glancing,
Thousands tread the fairy mazes,
Where the torchlight round them blazes.
One has left the gleaming river,
And poor Margaret's pulses shiver,
For advancing toward her slowly,
With his proud head bended lowly,
Proffers he bright jewels golden,
Wrought in rare forms, quaint and olden.
But rich jewels, rare and splendid,
Tempt not one whose hope has ended.

Margaret, for Harold seeking,
Only waits the Nix's speaking.
She has asked for truth forbidden,
Asked for that which God has hidden;
And her heart is wildly throbbing,
While her voice is lost in sobbing,
For the Nix a scene is showing,
Dim at first, but clearer growing,
Of a battlefield all bloody;
Grass and ground with gore are ruddy,
And among the dead men lying
Sees she Harold slowly dying.
Through the night a shriek upsending,
With the owl's hoot shrilly blending,
Margaret falls prone, and falling,
Not on Christ, but Harold, calling,
Feels through all her being stealing,
Some dread change her life congealing.

. . . . . .

Where the waves are flowing stilly
Floats a queenly water-lily.
When the morning's growing brightness
Flashes on the lily's whiteness,
Down within the petals tender
Shines one dewdrop's opal splendor,
Like a tear that springs, while sleeping,
From a child that dreams of weeping.

Free from thought, from hope or sorrow,
Careless of the coming morrow,
Margaret, by demon power
Prisoned in the queenly flower,
Floats upon the water chilly,
Maiden heart in maiden lily.
Legend saith, at midnight hour
Sobs and wails the charmèd flower,
Ever "Harold! Harold!" calling
Till the light of morn is falling.
If it be the lily wailing
Till the gloom of night is paling,
Or the waves that meet and mingle,
Whispering on the stony shingle,
This is known to God, All-Seeing,
Not to any mortal being.
Summers five and threescore ending,
She shall waken, reascending
From the wave a blooming maiden,
Not with hopeless sorrow laden;
Gone the trouble that oppressed her.
Mary, Mother, save and rest her!

MY DREAM

OUT with the buttercup blossoms,
Down on the clover hay,
Years ago was it, or yesterday,
I sat me down to play?

The earth was drunken with sunshine,
The air with happiness stirred,
My heart was beating with music
And sang to my soul like a bird.

Plucking the buttercup blossoms,
Watching the clouds and the skies,
I know not if slumber surprised me,
Or sunshine had dazzled my eyes, —

Hidden were blossom and sunlight,
Hushed were the songs from the trees,
Sullen and gray were the heavens,
Moaned in the forest the breeze.

Dead in my heart was the music,
  Sad were my musings, and drear,
Youth had deserted my bosom,
  Chill was the landscape and sere.

Which was the dream, and which real —
  The music, the sunshine, the spring,
Or autumn, its gloom and its storm clouds,
  Its dry leaves where icicles cling?

The dream of old age and of autumn
  Is surely naught but a dream;
The springtime, the youth, and the fragrance
  Are real, and true as they seem.

Ah me! though I know I am dreaming,
  From slumber not yet can I break,
The vision of age is unreal,
  A dream — but I cannot awake!

ASPIRATION

CALLING from the mystic distance,
Voices low and sweet I hear;
Night and day with strange persistence
Call these voices soft and clear;

Call from hill and shadowy dingle,
From the river and the sea;
With all sounds the voices mingle,
Always do they plead with me.

In the mart's discordant noises,
Through the strife and din of gain,
Sing these sweet, mysterious voices,
Sing their pure unworldly strain.

When I hear them low and sweetly
Pierce the world's tumultuous din,
Other sounds I lose completely
And my life seems poor and thin.

Then my soul is strongly lifted
Far above earth's petty jars,
By some sweeping current drifted
With the current of the stars.

O my voices! come still nearer,
Take me from the world apart,
Sing to me your songs yet clearer,
Make your home within my heart.

A SUNSET PICTURE

WHEN the sunset's crimson fire
Brightens hill, and tree, and spire,
And the city's myriad noises weary heart, and soul, and brain;
Through the din, and dust, and bustle,
Comes the forest's whispering rustle,
And I go to keep my trysting, far adown the narrow lane.

Where the brook is swiftly leaping,
Or in still pool softly sleeping,
Every ripple in the sunlight is a wave of crimson flame;
Red and gold above are glowing,
Red and gold the brook is flowing,
Burns the sunset in the wave as if the brook from sunset came.

Down the valley's sweeping vista,
In the distance warm and misty,

Lies the many-steepled city, basking in the closing day;
Flash the panes with sunset brightness,
And the great dome's rosy whiteness
Rises in the evening purple, like a cloud that floats away.

From the willow branches airy,
Fitting home for elf and fairy,
Pours a gush of hymn-like music, filling all the lonely glen;
Dropping through the sunset splendor
Come the full notes, sweet and tender,
From amid the swinging branches where is hid the mocking wren.

From the east the night is falling;
One lone owl his mate is calling
Where the cedars' ink-black shadows crown with gloom the rocky steep.
As I wander homeward slowly,
Night and silence, pure and holy,
Calm my spirit, as a mother sings her fevered child to sleep.

TO COLLETTE

O MAIDEN fair, with sunny hair, come to me for an hour,
With one sweet smile bribe Death awhile — he will relax his power;
Come while the day fades into gray; I wait thee by the tree,
And in thy presence I shall smile, from grief a moment free.

O sweet Collette! a wild regret at evening dims my eyes;
Each rising morn anew is born my grief that never dies;
Through long, long years comes to my ears thy voice of love and song;
I hear the accents in the mart where worldlings crowd and throng.

I sit and dream beside the stream made sacred by thy love,
The same broad tree that sheltered thee, sighs in the air above;
The liquid flow of waves below comes like thy whispered tone,
And seems to tell my aching heart that I am not alone.

Around my seat I hear thy feet bend low the silken grass;
Is it the breeze in vine and trees, or does thy spirit pass?
Thy hand is now upon my brow, I feel its youthful glow;
'T is not the perfumed southern wind, — thy gentle touch I know.

I turn to press with fond caress the hand which seems so near, —
No tender clasp returns my grasp, thy voice no more I hear.
Leave me not yet, O young Collette! this is thy olden bower;
Here in the evening's golden light remain another hour.

The red clouds fade; a deeper shade hides tree, and hill, and plain;
A pale, cool mist, by moonbeams kissed, creeps from the darksome lane;
Gone from my ken are hill and glen; they vanished with the day; —
Or am I drifting into night, from hope and life away?

How ghostly white, across my sight, the moonlit clouds float by;
How tenderly comes up to me the soft wave's mournful sigh!
From dusky hill the whip-poor-will chants out his elfin tale;
I listen to these sounds of night, and only hear a wail.

O maiden fair, with sunny hair, come back for one short hour!
Bribe Death awhile with one sweet smile, — he will forget his power;
Come to my night like morning light; bring sunshine to my sky,
Then clasp my hand, and life may pass, — I were content to die.

TO AN AUTUMN VIOLET

DEAR relic of a vanished spring,
Sweet floweret, lone and wild,
How could the chilly autumn bring
So bright and frail a child?

Thy hue is just as warm and deep,
As though the golden ray
Of spring had waked thee from thy sleep,
To gentle, genial day.

All sadly looks the autumn scene,
The leaves are brown and sere,
The fields have lost their pleasant green,
And wanes the aged year.

But thou, dear blossom, in thy place
Beneath the sheltering tree,
Hast still a smile of spring-like grace,
For Autumn and for me.

Still upward looks thy purple eye,
As cheerful and as bright,
As though above thee bent a sky
All warm with summer light.

O that the coming frost would spare
Thy trusting, tender head,
And every gale with gentle care
Pass lightly by thy bed!

But ere to-morrow's struggling ray
Shall pale night's clouded gloom,
Thy little life will flee away,
And snow will hide thy tomb.

THE CAGED MOCKING BIRD'S SONG

I HEAR the green woods of the south breathe softly in my ear;
A whispered invitation comes which I alone can hear;
It speaks to me of sunny lands where summer always shines,
Where purple clusters of the grape forever load the vines,
And bids me leave this chilly clime whose cold rains drench the earth,
And seek a fairer, brighter home where summer has her birth.
And I would go, — O how my heart yearns for that sunny shore!
But I may never see its groves and green savannas more.
Long, long ago, before hard fate had doomed me here to pine,
A noble oak tree was my home, roofed by a spreading vine;
Beneath this green and fragrant dome, where silver echoes play,
I poured my spirit out in song, and dreamed my life away.
I whispered music to the trees when noon lay on the hill;
The goldfinch as he heard my lay ceased in his liquid trill;

The cool, dark places of the wood rang to my dreamy lay,
And, charmed amid the chestnut boughs, the squirrel ceased to play.
But when the balmy southern night had hushed the gentle breeze,
When, quivering like a silver veil, the moon lay on the trees,
When flecks of pearl-like clouds went by, like fairy ships, above,
And all the earth, the air, the sky, were tremulous with love,
Then from my secret soul my song went out the night to cheer;
The moonlit landscape hushed its voice and held its breath to hear.
Still stronger in my swelling breast the panting music grew,
Still wilder, deeper grew my song with every breath I drew;
The whip-poor-will, whose lonely note at times had waked the night,
Grew still before my rushing lay, and listened with delight.
So full of music was my heart I madly wished to die;
I longed to pierce the secret fields within the purple sky,
Where through the long and silent night the bright stars always shone,
So changeless, smiling on the earth, mysterious and alone.
Then upward through the dewy air I turned my rapid flight,
Up through the moonlight, toward the stars, up through the solemn night,

I sought the gateway of the sky, beyond whose portals lay
Delicious fields of fairer flowers, bathed in a brighter day.
Yet ever baffled in my search, my drooping wing would fail,
And weary with my upward flight I sought the moonlit vale,
And poured again my spirit forth, a longing for the sky,
A wish for one diviner song, then satisfied, to die.
But never to my thirsting soul has come the sky-born lay,
The cruel trapper of the wood has reft my soul away ;
I see no more the southern palms, no kindred voice is near,
My weary, wasted life I pass, a hopeless captive here.

SONG

PLUCK the rosebud while the dew
Fresher makes its rosy hue,
For when noon is in the sky
Rosebuds wither, droop, and die;
If we lose their morning glow,
Noon but faded leaves can show.
Pluck the rose of Love in youth,
Lest in age we gather ruth.

Seek the moonlight when, in June,
Evening breezes sing their rune,
When the hills are shadowy white
And a paler day seems night;
Clouds will soon make dark the sky,
Seek the moonlight ere it fly.
Seek the light of Love in youth,
Lest in age we find but ruth.

Listen to the birds of spring
When their tender songs they sing,
When the earth is full of bloom
And we fear not cloud nor gloom;
Soon comes winter, chill and gray,
And the song birds flee away.
Listen to Love's song in youth,
Lest in age we hear but ruth.

MY FRIEND

UPON a lofty, barren hill there stands a lonely tree,
One stern survivor only left, where thousands used to be;
A single string of that great harp whose soul in music spoke,
When, rushing from the cloudy east, the driving tempest broke.
I watch at eve that lonely tree, red with the failing light,
And mark it slowly fade from view as darkens down the night.
Yet when the deepest darkness reigns, I know that on the hill,
Through midnight hours that grand old tree, unwearied, watches still.
I love it as a human friend; I feel that night can bring,
While he keeps watch so faithfully, to me no evil thing.
I turn my last glance to his form when evening slowly dies,
My first look seeks him when the morn glows in the eastern skies.
I climb the hill when day is gone and sit beneath the tree,
To catch its voice and tune my soul to its high melody;

I hear it breathe when through the leaves the evening wind
is blown,
Soft whispers of mysterious things, in low, sweet monotone.
And when, save this low breathing voice, no other sound
is heard,
My thoughts turn backward to the past, old memories are
stirred.
I feel the happy glow of youth; I see the foamy rill
Glide from the shadows of the glen and leap adown the hill;
I see the hawk, a feathered speck, sail through the sunny
sky;
I watch the shadows of the clouds along the pastures fly;
The bees are in the clover field, I hear their busy hum;
The scents of old, forgotten flowers across the distance
come;
The bending mowers swing their scythes; and in the sun-
flecked shade,
Where winds a path beside the trees, along the grassy glade,
A brown-haired maiden trips along; oh, how supremely fair
The whole earth seemed when first my hand dared smooth
that silken hair;
When first I dared, with beating heart, to look deep in those
eyes,
Pure as the dew within a rose, and bluer than the skies!
From out the stillness and the dark I hear the owl's weird
scream;
I cannot tell if I am young, or if I only dream.

And yet I know that youth is gone; I sit beneath the tree,
And in the murmur of its leaves old days come back to me;
But dreams will sometimes cheer the heart, and mine has
fresher grown
For dreaming underneath the tree of days that long have
flown.
Old tree, I ask not from thy leaves the tale of coming years,
I would not know my future life, perchance 't is sad with
tears;
It is enough thy spell can bring youth's brightness back
once more,
And on the sombre, present days its sun-bright glory pour.

DRIPPING SPRING

(Cabin John Creek, District of Columbia)

FROM the cold rocks softly slipping,
Down the pendant mosses dripping,
Comes the water, cool and shining as the early morning light;
Here in streamlets fine and single,
There they meet, combine, and mingle, —
Never ceasing pours the water from the subterranean night.

While the wood in noon is sleeping,
And the birds are silence keeping,
I can hear the spring's soft patter whisper in the pool below;
And the water's murmurous singing
Long forgotten thoughts is bringing
From the days of childhood's sunshine, from the land of Long Ago.

Voices speak, so real, seeming
Like our lost ones heard when dreaming,
That I lift my head to answer; then they change to murmurs low,
Change to sounds of water flowing,
Of the stream forever going,
And the seeming from the real scarcely may I surely know.

DEATH: A VISION

AT night I dreamed of spectres drear:
Fantastic shapes of pain and fear
Across the dark drew slowly near.

Men bowed with grief, men red with shame;
Blasphemers giving God the blame
Of their own sin, before me came.

Women with faces still and white
Came forward through the murky night,
With sad eyes watching for the light.

Children with soft lips white with fears,
Their pure young eyes all dim with tears,
Their faces older than their years,

Were searching for some missing face
Throughout that thronged and dreary space,
Yet found it not in all the place.

Fear dwelt in every sleepless eye;
Some terror seemed forever nigh
From which they vainly strove to fly.

In countless myriads came the throng;
The sick, the well, the weak, the strong,
Sinner and sinless swept along.

And over all hung densest night;
On every side, to left, to right
I searched, but saw no ray of light.

Only the myriad faces shone
With a pale lustre of their own, —
No light was there save this alone.

And this faint light did not prevail
Against the midnight's heavy veil;
It only showed the wanderers, pale.

Then far above the moving stream
I saw a dim and vapory gleam
Like the first flash of morning's beam;

And in the midst came slow to sight
A glorious form, supremely bright,
His light robes radiating light.

His face changed ever to the view;
Now terrible, now sweet it grew;
Ever it changed to somewhat new.

And on the press below his feet
He bent a look so sadly sweet,
I longed his tender glance to meet;

For, so it seemed, that look would bring
Peace unto each created thing,
Answers to every questioning.

Then, stooping down, he took the hand
Of one among that countless band
Which wandered through the midnight land,

And drew him softly to his breast
As he would lull him into rest
Sweeter than ever mortal blessed.

But terror seized the wanderer's heart;
He strove the angel's hands to part,
Struggled from that kind breast to start.

But, when in that majestic face
He gazed, all fear and weariness
To measureless content gave place.

And when the wanderer's doubts were stilled,
And warm his heart that fear had chilled,
And trust his weary bosom filled,

Up towards a pulsing light that beamed
From far above, and downward streamed,
The angel lifted him who dreamed;

And half seen arms received him there,
And smiles from lips divinely fair
Banished all memory of care.

But ere the wanderer vanished quite,
Within the soft celestial light,
His face had grown serenely bright;

And tenfold life shone in his eyes;
His countenance put on a guise
Like that of souls in Paradise,

And then he vanished in the glow.
And ever from the throng below
That wandered aimless to and fro,

One after one the angel took,
Stilled with a touch the hearts that shook
And banished terror by his look.

This word of truth the vision saith :
Life lives not in our daily breath,
The life of Life is found in Death.

AUTUMN SIGNS

MIDSUMMER wraps the earth in heat,
The odorous noon is still;
The day's warm heart seems scarce to beat;
The dark pines on the hill
Stand like enchanted sentinels
That stir not till the enchanter calls.

Along the far horizon's rim
Hangs poised a cloudy line
Of vaporous peaks whose summits dim
With misty sunlight shine.
It is midsummer's fullest tide.
Can autumn with midsummer bide?

Even in midsummer's richest flush
Autumn has found a place,
The wandering woodbine's burning blush
His earliest kisses trace;
Her leaves with his first touch are bright
And glow beneath the noonday light.

The bluebird haunts the woody dell,
And by his pensive lay
He tells the listener all too well
Of summer's fading day;
His joy in sweetest music drest
Brings yet a sadness to the breast.

So life amid its brightest glow
Has moments when the eye
Looks forward to the vale below
Where heavy shadows lie;
And from its happy, golden years
Sees clouds whose gloom shall break in tears.

THE GIFT

I

IT was evening, and the sun
Long had vanished; one by one
Came the stars the sky upon,
And the Toiler's work was done.

II

Peaceful on his bed he lay,
Dreaming of the toil of day;
Weariness had passed away —
Near to sleep it cannot stay.

III

Pale the sleeper grew, and chill;
Still he lay, so very still,
That to wake he had no will;
Haply, naught his heart could thrill.

IV

Yet a whisper smote his ear;
Came it far, or rose it near,
On his sense it struck so clear
That at first he shrank with fear.

V

And the whisper seemed to say:
"Why with toil and sorrow stay
When to rest I point the way?
Leave them far behind to-day.

VI

"Lo! the gift I give is sweet,
Rest it brings to weary feet,
Peace to hearts that sadly beat;
Life and joy it makes complete."

VII

And the sleeper, dreaming on,
Wakes not at the morning's dawn,
Far away his soul is drawn,
With the Giver it has gone.

VIII

And upon his mouth there lies,
And his closely lidded eyes,
Joyful, infinite surprise
At the gift and Giver wise.

THE HEART'S WINTER

'TIS winter time. The wood is still,
No more the birds its arches fill
With airy song and tremulous trill.

The thousand summer birds have fled,
The myriad summer flowers are dead,
And frost and winter rule instead.

Yet one sweet bird, in cold and storm,
Keeps his brave heart with music warm,
Though whirling snowflakes round him swarm.

One bird alone, the mocking wren,
Sings from the pine adown the glen,
Sweet as he sang in springtime, when

The woods were bright with shy, young flowers,
And sunshine trembled through warm showers,
And love and music marked the hours.

That lovely song brings back again
The memory of a sweeter strain
Hid in the chambers of my brain.

A song of love and joy and youth,
Of glowing hope and stainless truth.
Ah! not a thought was there of ruth.

No thought was there of doubt or fear;
Too full of music was my ear
Such low, sad whisperings to hear;

Too full of light my eyes to see
Life's chilly shadows nearing me
Across the breadth of years to be.

I did not know that sorrow's moan
Could mingle with love's sweetest tone,
Till sorrow's voice was heard alone.

Sometimes at eve, when on the sky
Dark clouds of stormy portent lie,
Lifting their gloomy summits high,

Some rift athwart the ridges cold,
Lets through the sunset's quickening gold;
Then the mirk vapors, fold on fold,

With sudden, vivid splendor blaze,
Making the west a fiery maze
Where more than noonday brightness plays.

Forgot is all the stormy gray;
The threatening gloom is chased away
By light, which seems returning day.

But suddenly the glory dies;
The sunset splendor leaves the skies,
And night on cloud and landscape lies.

So this dark day of cloud and snow,
Touched by a bird song sweet and low,
Gives back my youth's divinest glow;

And sorrow, age and snow are gone,
Back through the years my soul is drawn
Into the warmth of Life's young dawn.

Above the dim horizon far,
Rises my golden morning star,
With not a cloud its light to mar.

Gone are the years of grief and pain,
And youth and love have come again,
Over my heart for aye to reign.

For aye ? — The bird his singing stills,
A sudden brooding silence fills
The circuit of the snowy hills;

And slowly into memory's hold
Drift back the lights of rose and gold,
Leaving my world to gloom and cold.

As the fair vision disappears,
The songs of love die in my ears,
And life looks sad through gathered tears.

1888–1889

ANOTHER wave breaks at my feet;
Another cycle is complete;
Of Time's great heart another beat.

Twelve months agone, the winter skies,
Watched by Orion's starry eyes,
Trembled to earth-born harmonies;

For, drifting from Eternity,
Another year began to be,
And men rejoiced its birth to see.

What gifts the newborn year might bring;
What flowers along his path would spring;
What songs should love and rapture sing!

Not as of old should grief and pain
Mar with their gloom the new year's reign,
Nor sorrow seek for rest in vain.

And now that year of promise dies,
As up the midnight's frosty skies
Another year begins to rise.

How much of good that dead year brought;
How much by loss our hearts he taught;
And yet how different from our thought!

Some flowers along his pathway grew,
Roses at times, and bitter rue,
And passing clouds shut out the blue.

Ah! not the sweetest hour of spring,
Nor fairest day his June might bring,
Could equal our imagining.

For Hope's fair light was in our eyes,
Sorrow was hid in pleasure's guise,
And Life should give its royal prize.

Now, while Orion's changeless blaze
Watches the old year's closing days,
On what he brought we sadly gaze.

Life's royal prize we did not win,
But ripened sheaves of selfish sin
We did not fail to gather in.

Some gifts whose worth we valued not
He took again, and sternly taught,
By loss, a higher, purer thought.

Pain gave he as a precious thing;
And grief, — no better could he bring
To lift the soul on lofty wing.

Taught by the old, we trust the new,
With roses take the bitter rue,
And cloud and tempest with the blue.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

A GRAY old house, some mossy trees,
Pale lilac blossoms, humming bees,
Grass hiding half the threshold stone,
The windows broken, dwellers gone.
Near by the downy catnip grows,
And in the grass a thorny rose.
Tall, sun-tanned lilies holding up
To catch the sunshine, each her cup,
Nod to the breeze in dreamy trance,
Like wild Bacchantes tired with dance.
All tenderly the sunshine falls
Upon the weather-blackened walls,
And through the windows fills the rooms
And chases out the haunting glooms.
A vine beside the casement clings
And in the warm air lightly swings,
And peering through the shattered pane,
Looks for the old, sweet life in vain.
Yet while I muse, the bees' soft hum
Seems from the far, dead years to come,

And grows to sound of pattering feet,
And childish laughter, thrilling sweet.
How sunny look those warm, past years,
As if they had no clouds or tears;
But in the shade of yonder oak
Three mossy gravestones, rude and broke,
Record the grief which dimmed the light
Of those old days which seem so bright.
The bobolink on tremulous wings
Floats by and passionately sings,
Sending a rain of music down
Which floods the old house, bleak and brown.
Hope, love, affection, joy, and tears
Have perished with the perished years;
Homes shaped by strong hands long ago,
Stand roofless to the rain and snow;
All things are changed save only one:
As sang the birds long years agone
They sing to-day; the selfsame tunes
Thrilled the blue air of vanished Junes,
Which make the echoes sing this morn
As music had been newly born.
Strange that the walls so strongly planned
Should yield to time's destroying hand,
Yet drifting down a century's range,
The robin's song should never change.

From those old days, 't is sad to think,
The June song of the bobolink,
Pulsing, immortal, through the years,
Survives all human joys and fears.
But as the rain and evening dew
Fall on the hill and pass from view,
Though seeming lost appear again,
As fountains on the distant plain,
So did the love, which here begun,
To other hearts and regions run,
And growing broader in its flow,
Refresh more souls than we can know;
And every drop of Love's sweet stream
Reflects God's heaven in its gleam.

THREE GIFTS

LIFE

STILL and white a woman lies;
Earth returns to heart and eyes;
Death no longer she descries,
But Life, a child from Paradise.

LOVE

Heart to heart they stand alone,
Youth and maiden, two but one,
Love's sweet rainbow o'er them thrown
Naught they know but love alone.

DEATH

Still and white a woman lies;
Earth has faded from her eyes,
But her failing sight descries
Light from coming Paradise.

QUESTIONINGS

I HAVE not lived; give me one hour,
Great with my life's concentred power;
A moment when my eyes may gaze
Unblinded on Truth's whitest rays,
And on my dull, unnoting ears
Vibrate the music of the spheres.
Life must be more than food or sleep,
Than fretting cares and riches cheap;
I weary of such things as these,
The shallow stir of shallow seas,
Give me the swing of surges deep,
When thought's great ocean wakes from sleep,
And dashes with resistless shock
On stagnant Life's foundation rock.
I question Nature of the force
Which swells the buds in spring's slow course;
Which draws the birds from lands of sun
To wilds where spring has scarce begun;
Which drifts the tides unrestingly
Through stormy leagues of heaving sea;

But never comes an answer clear,
Only a thought of doubt and fear,
That all we know, that all we see,
Is so, — because it so must be;
Which leaves all things, how small or great,
The sport of an unreasoning Fate.
Before the earth had ever seen
A flower expand, a leaf grow green,
Some mind had shaped their whole design,
Had laid in thought their every line,
Ere the first spring had warmed the earth,
And gave the thought material birth.
Yet deeper hid, some purpose lurks
Behind the Great Inventor's works.
What is the central thought which glows
Beneath this landscape's charmed repose?
The lovely earth around me lies,
Its sky-like seas, its sea-like skies;
Far mountains, blue as amethyst;
Long valleys fading in the mist;
Flowers pure enough to meet the eyes
Of those who dwell in Paradise;
Broad forests on the hillsides rest,
Morn warms the east, eve cools the west.
The gray rocks of the shadowy cliffs
Are eloquent with hieroglyphs,

God's poems, writ in lichens pale,
But what Champollion reads the tale?
Alas! we scarcely know as yet
One letter of God's alphabet.
Not merely for the careless eye
Is all this loveliness of sky;
Nor that the soul delighted sees
Broad leagues of valleys, lakes, and trees,
Was this fair scene in beauty wrought
By process of creative thought.
We fain would think the primal plan
Was all arranged for last-born man;
That earth for him was ploughed with fire,
Wrenched and convulsed by earthquakes dire,
By crushing glaciers rolled and pressed,
To smooth the way for Nature's guest.
But why for man before the brute
Bears kindly earth its annual fruit?
Was the great Sun's eternal blaze
Hung in the sky, to send its rays
Through measureless space to fill the eye
Of man, that he may sell and buy?
Unless we soar to greater acts,
Find deeper truths in common facts,
Take Nature's greatness for our guide
And make our living free and wide,

Then is creation far too great,
Man's outgrowth incommensurate
With the great forces brought in play
To raise him from insensate clay —
The mighty earthquake's heave and thrust
To lift a mote of lightest dust.
Yet it may be, by slow degrees
Gathering truth through centuries,
His vision, purified, shall see
The way to be divinely free,
And learn if the creative plan
Perfects itself by birth of man;
Or if the distant years shall see
A being greater far than he
Walking the earth with kingly tread,
Whence man and all his works have fled,
Save grassy mounds, within whose breast
The wrecks of our fair cities rest,
And ruined sculpture, rough and stained,
Exhumed by chance, to be disdained.

MERIDIAN HILL

FROM this hilltop, far extended
Till the earth and sky are blended,
Stretch broad valley, stream, and city, blushing in the evening sun;
On the slowly winding river
Dancing wavelets shine and quiver
As if love of air and sunshine made them sparkle, leap, and run.

In the sunset's golden shimmer
How countless windows glimmer!
Through the rosy haze of evening, seems it like a fairy spot;
Distant bells are softly ringing,
Birds their vesper songs are singing;
Not more fair than this bright city shone old "dim, rich Camelot."

Near at hand the oak trees hoary,
Whisper in the fading glory
Tales of eld, and as I listen, sweet, sad thoughts their murmur brings;

Through my heart their voices seeking,
Seem like memory faintly speaking,
Or like Death when death is welcome; or a love-song when
Love sings.

Slowly fades the sunset splendor;
In the zenith, white and tender,
Shines one star, a crown of glory on immortal Orpheus' lyre.
O that his strong soul descending,
With my feeble spirit blending,
Might illumine all my being with his deathless poet-fire!

Wending homeward, earth seems lonely.
Is it Friendship, or Love only,
Has the power to lift the spirit upward into radiant morn?
As the night with stars is sparkling,
So my soul, though now all darkling,
Soon shall see its darkness brighten, as Hope's golden light
is born.

TO A FOREST SPRING

ADOWN the mosses green and bright,
Thou streamest like a thing of light,
Cool as the rocks that gave thee birth,
And pure as if untouched by earth.
Born in the depths to light unknown,
In gloom thou wanderest alone
Where sunless strata, worn and old
Thy youth in secret places hold.
Yet when thou comest into day,
It is as if a sparkling ray
Had dropped from out the rainbow's sheen
To shine among the mosses green.
How couldst thou learn in rayless night
The endless play of skyborn light;
Have such a gloomy natal place,
And bear of gloom no single trace?
O pure, bright spring, I look at thee,
And hope it may be so with me;
I too may find some perfect day,
When gloom and sin shall drop away,
And leave my soul unscarred and bright,
A child, like thee, of cloudless light.

. . . . . .

THEN came to me, or if a real voice,
Or by some power impressed upon my soul
I know not, but I seemed to hear these words:
"Arise and follow;" and I blindly went.
The sky was trembling with its myriad stars;
The white young moon, low in the twilight west,
Just dipped its crescent to the horizon's line.
From the far north where blue Capella gleamed,
Down the long line of soft, galactic fire,
Aldebaran, Orion, Sirius
Burned in a mighty line as if to mark
The boundary of some outer universe,
Ruled, haply, by another God than ours.
Then, ere a thought could pulse across my brain,
I felt myself seized by resistless power,
And swifter than the undulating rush
Of the white rays of light across the void
From star to star, we darted into space.
Onward and outward through the countless stars,
Toward the white, lambent Galaxy we swept,

And ere had passed such time as on the earth
Barely suffices for two quickened breaths,
We rushed into and passed the scorching light
Which mighty Sirius scatters into space;
Still on and outward, till the silvery mist
Of the far Milky Way grew into stars,
Grew into blazing suns, shrunk back to stars,
Then far behind it paled once more to mist
Which in a moment melted into naught;
On to a region where the eye of man,
Aided howe'er by mirror, lens, or prism
Has never reached: still on, and on, and on,
Till glancing back the universe of stars
Had shrunk and dwindled to one radiant point.
Then that, the last sign of creating power,
That ray connecting me with God and light
Utterly vanished, whelmed in night and gloom.
The universe of light and life and love,
Of planets, worlds, and suns was blotted out,
And darkness which had never known how sweet
It is to tremble to a ray of light,
A silence which through the eternities
Had never felt the impact of a sound
Enveloped me in horror. I had passed
Beyond the bound of all created things
And entered on a starless void of space
Where life and light, and sound and God were not.

The dreadful silence of that infinite night,
Whose darkness was like that which brooded space
When God alone existed, ere the suns,
By Him spoke into being, scattered light,
Made me to cling in terror to my Guide.
Then backward toward the way from whence we came
I turned to catch perchance a single gleam
From the far universe of sparkling stars.
No ray pierced through the dread unbroken gloom.
Night, silence, terror held my shuddering soul;
I turned away, wishing that friendly Death
Would close my eyes forever. But I felt
Death's realm extended not where life was not
And I had swept so far beyond all life,
So far had Death himself been left behind,
That he might search until himself should die
And I be undiscovered. Then my Guide
Or spoke, or on my brain impressed his thought:
"Lift up thine eyes once more." And looking back
Along the way we came I saw a spot
Of nebulous light shiver the horrent gloom.
O sweeter than the sweetest golden dawn
To him who longs for morning, was that ray
To my search-wearied eyes. Slowly it grew
Brighter and larger to my eager sight,
And then, O wondrous God! that single ray
Grew double, triple, myriad-fold, until

The number seemed infinity. And I
Watched that unspeakable drift of dazzling light,
That visible sign of Him, the Uncreate,
Roll out the infinite, astronomic morn
Into the lifeless void of ancient night
And fill all space with glory. On they swept,
Stars, suns, and systems, flashing new-born light
Into the gloom which rolled forever back
Before these morning bringers. More and more
Farther and farther outward swept the tide,
Until the firmament above, below,
Where had been night from all eternity
Now trembled with the pulse of youthful suns : —
And then the vision vanished : And I sat
Alone among my books ; and from a spire
Came the slow strokes which told the hour — one — two !

ANACREONTIC

LOVE is sleeping; silence keep;
Wake him not, if you would sleep;
Waking, gentle songs he sings,
Opening buds and sweets he brings,
Like a friend he plays his part,
But — he always steals the heart.
Watch him closely as you will,
Guard yourself with greatest skill,
Hold his thievish fingers tight,
He will find, by day or night,
Artful means to make you rest,
While he robs your aching breast.
Love is sleeping; let him sleep,
Lest he wake to make you weep.

A SUMMER SUNRISE

THE world is new created every morn.
God's spirit moves upon the face of night,
And morning, loveliness, and light are born.
Thick darkness broods upon the earth; the stars
From their unchanging thrones look coldly down,
As if forgetful of that primal morn
When the first sunrise blazed across the sky,
And they, the youthful stars, with choric song
Swelled the glad shouting of the sons of God.
No breath of air flutters the dewy leaves;
Silence unbroken reigns, save far away
The slumbrous murmur of a drowsy brook
Comes softly, like a sleeping infant's sigh.
The dim horizon in the shadowy east,
Fringed by an ink-black line of silent trees,
Seems like a barrier impassable
Between the land of night and some far world
Where everlasting morning reigns supreme.
But while I wait, a low, dim line of gray
Lifts the dense darkness from the ghostly trees,

A faint, half promise of another morn,
Like the cold gray that crowns an old man's head,
The first pale ray of his swift coming dawn,
Which brings to him, through death, immortal day.
From copses dripping with the night's chill dew
Low bird songs stir the silence; and a breath
Of spicy air just wakened from its sleep
Rustles among the leaves and silken grass,
As if the shadowy spirits of the night,
Seeing the morn upon the eastern hills,
Made haste to hide them from the coming day.
The sky grows warm with streams of ruddy gold,
Which flush the morn's pale cheek with tender red;
The mountains glow with purple; day is born.
Great waves of light roll from the glowing east
And break in scarlet foam among the stars.
From hill to hill the level rays extend,
Bridging with yellow light the lingering gloom;
The shadows hide themselves beneath the trees,
And, fresh and dewy from the hand of God,
Another day shines on the happy earth,
Created as of old from shapeless gloom.

A WINTER SUNSET

POINTING the way to quiet, rocky vales,
A narrow lane leads out to freer air;
Leads to the dales where shady forests stand,
To windy hilltops, and to wider skies.
I trace the creek along its winding course,
And where the water leaps the thwarting dam,
And breaks from stillness into joyous sound,
I hear soft whispers in the low, deep rush,
That tell of forest secrets garnered up
From rock and tree root. In the steady roar,
I catch the thrush's love-song, and the sweet,
Low warble of the white-eyed vireo.
I hear all woodland sounds; and seem to hear
The secret of the stream's immortal youth.
Above the dam, the water still and dark
Shows depth on depth; the floating cloud above,
Now crimson with the sunset's fiery stain,
Is seen below, as bright within the wave
As where it floats above the darkening earth.
Could we but keep our souls as pure and still,

What sky, as yet unknown, might not be seen
Reflected in our spirit's deep repose ?
Yet when the current of our daily lives
Is checked a moment, headlong to the fall
We blindly rush, not thinking that the check
May bring a restful stillness to the life,
And when the waves of fretting trouble sleep,
The waiting mirror of the soul may catch
The dawning brightness of diviner skies.
The last pale flush of daylight fades away,
And all is silent but the rushing fall,
And from the wood the screech-owl's quivering hoot.
I slowly walk along the winding path,
Returning homeward by the lonely lane.
The trees above me in the wintry air
Stand like dim ghosts watching beside a grave ;
And hill and forest wrapped in brooding night,
Seem waiting for the morning light to dawn.
The whole earth sleeps in frost ; and seeming death
Holds all the woodland life in moveless trance ;
Yet at the magic kiss of royal spring
Ten thousand forms inspired anew with life
Shall fill the world with beauty, love and song.
I look far onward to the coming years
And see a spring time which shall touch all men
With newer life, and wake their souls to light ;
The dry, bare forest of bewildered thought

Shall bud and blossom with poetic life
And hide sweet singers in its flowery shade.
And that new spring shall grow to riper days
And bring the summer, whose lush growth shall be
The sinless man, in God's own image made.

A REMINISCENCE

HOW many years have come and gone since on this grassy swell
I stood, while sunshine, birds, and flowers wove round my heart their spell,
A spell whose sweetness lingers yet, and makes this morning seem
A vision of returning youth, dream-like, yet not a dream.
The laughing brook still leaps and sings, but once its waters rolled
Along the bowers of Fairy Land; o'er sand and stones of gold.
The sparrow trills the same sweet lay, and from the farm I hear
The varied sounds of quiet life which charmed my youthful ear.
Unchanged those purple hills appear, and still the lovely sky
Bends down to kiss their sunny tops as in the days gone by.
I live again in golden youth; once more my pulses thrill

With life too crowded for my heart, too warm for age to chill.
Again I watch the silver clouds, and in their airy vales
I fancy quiet, azure lakes, studded with snowy sails.
O how I gazed with heart entranced upon the lilac flowers!
I saw within their purple glow the light of summer hours.
At that sweet time, a day — an hour — was one long age of bliss;
Has manhood brought a real joy, more pure and full than this?
What fancies of a brighter life came to my untaught heart,
When through the orchard's fragrant snow the humming-bird would dart;
Or like a stream of orange fire the oriole would fly,
And fling his ringing melody down from the sunny sky.
And when behind the sunny hill, fringed with the solemn pine,
The sun, to end that *endless* day, would silently decline,
It seemed as though eternity had crowded those few hours,
And Paradise had strewn the earth with its unfading flowers.
Then in the dim, mysterious west, where paling daylight shone,
I saw upon the amber sky, great forests, dark and lone;
And golden towers and palaces, whose panes of fairy mould,

Were gleaming in the changing light, like ruddy burning gold.
And as the deeper darkness came, when field, and tree, and stream
Were hidden half and half revealed, like landscape in a dream,
When softly through the three old pines the sighing wind would sing,
What wild, weird fancies to my brain its melody would bring!
I watched the branches slowly wave, ink black against the west,
And thought the great Arabian bird had come from some long quest,
To lift me with resistless wing and set my willing feet
Where round the towers of sunset gold the waves of evening beat.

REACHING

THE wind is south; a purple haze
Makes dim the morning's yellow rays,
In sheltered nooks the young grass springs,
His matin song the sparrow sings,
Thin lines of cirrus mark the sky,
In crowded ranks the crows sweep by.
The dark pine anchored on the hill
Feels spring in every fibre thrill,
And trembles to the whispered tones
Brought by the wind from summer zones.
I leave the city and the crowd,
The restless life, the noises loud,
And climb the hill, where, large and free,
The broad sky bends to speak to me.
I watch and wait; the earth and sky
Meet me with perfect sympathy.
Not sooner moved by Nature's sway
Is yon white cloud than I, to-day.
Scarce hidden underneath the shroud
Of springing leaf and floating cloud,
The First Great Life seems visible

In bud and blossom, tree and hill.
Imperial sky and flushing rose
Their sacred mystery disclose —
That source of life which gives them power
To be broad sky and glowing flower.
Immortal life pervades the whole;
A mystic, thinking, planning soul
Embraces air, the sea, the land,
The farthest star, the grain of sand;
Infinite in the sun's far whirl,
Infinite in the tendril's curl.
Creation has but reached its morn,
But yesterday the suns were born.
The cosmic morning's growing blaze
Rolls outward o'er chaotic maze;
The foam of new creations pours
In light along night's silent shores;
Drives back the line with rhythmic beat
Where chaos and creation meet,
Each bubble of the spreading zone
A solar system like our own.
Through drifting æons grows the tide
Of morning, spreading far and wide;
While dazzled thought sinks helpless back
Striving to follow morning's track,
Then turns to the great central Sun,
The unknown, comprehending One,

Who, from His uncreated place,
Pours universes into space.
Beneath my foot the flower buds swell;
The never failing miracle
Of order, force, of life, of God,
Epitomized in this green sod.
While suns this Life of life obey,
Man lives obedient as they;
Ever he soars to greater height,
Sees broader skies and clearer light,
Draws nearer to the central power
Which kindles stars and paints the flower.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

A DAY of light, so fair and bright, 't is like a picture yet;
The glory still is on the hill, its sun has never set;
The same warm breeze plays in the trees, the flowers the same bees woo;
It seems but yesterday to me; do you remember too?

I see again the shaded lane, the sun, the grass, the bees;
We lingered long to hear the song of birds among the trees;
And when we found upon the ground the young bird, weak and chill,
You held the bird, I clasped your hands; do you remember still?

On hill and glade the shadows played that golden morn of June;
From birds and bees among the trees there came a soft, low tune.

How cool and sweet beneath our feet the fragrant clover lay :
Have you remembered through the years the sweetness of that day ?

The sunny hill where leaped the rill, a stream of snowy spray,
The deep ravine with mosses green, the rocks with lichens gray :
That dim, cool nook beside the brook ; how thrilled the stolen kiss !
Through life I never can forget : do you remember this ?

Far in the west the purple crest of Graylock met the sky ;
A floating curl of cloudy pearl half hid him from the eye :
Your look was turned where noonday burned on amethystine hill,
I saw your amethystine eyes — and I remember still.

Ah me ! that day has passed away ; swift years have followed years ;
The world's dull care no dream will spare ; time does not stop for tears.
But looking back on life's long track, old thoughts my feelings thrill.
That walk along the shady lane do you remember still ?

TRYSTING

I MADE a tryst with Love, to meet
Among the meadow-blossoms sweet,
When sunset fading into white
Leaves earth embraced by tender night.
I waited long; the mocking-bird
Had surely of my trysting heard,
For to the clover blooms he told
Of one whose heart was dead and cold.
Not hers for whom I watch and wait,
For true as spring, which comes though late,
And melts the ice, and brings the sun,
Is she the pure, the peerless one.
Why comes she not? The evening star
Is dying in the west afar,
The fragrant clover nods in sleep
While I, alone, my trysting keep.
A deeper darkness hides the hill,
The sighing wind grows sad and chill.
O Love, I wait in pain and fear
Thy footstep and thy voice to hear.
Thou comest not. My soul to-night

Has lost the glow of Hope's sweet light,
The clouds of fear hang black and low,
Doubt's lightning gleams shoot to and fro.
Be patient, heart. Though Love may fail
To meet thee in Life's flowery vale,
True Death, of friends the last and best,
Fails not his tryst; and gives thee rest.

"THROUGH THE CITY'S CEASELESS NOISE"

THROUGH the city's ceaseless noise,
Through the busy, crowded mart,
Came a tender, longing voice
Piercing to my secret heart:
As I listened, once again
Came that voice of pleading pain.

Gone were noise and steeds and men,
And there rose in place of these
Visions of a rocky glen,
Shaded walks and mighty trees,
And where coolest shadows lie
Two were walking — thou and I.

And I saw thy thoughts arise,
Ere they shaped themselves in word
Speaking from thy tender eyes
Sweeter than the songs of birds:
Didst thou think I had forgot?
Darling, O believe it not!

O my dear one! At thy feet
Night and day my spirit kneels,
And my heart at every beat
Always thy dear presence feels:
Nothing shall, while life is mine,
Separate my soul from thine.

During life? Nay darling, yet,
After Nature's powers have fled,
And my body pays its debt,
And the friends say, "He is dead,"
Shall I live through loving thee;
Love gives immortality.

And we cannot go apart;
One forever we must be,
One in love and one in heart
Drifting through eternity.
Though broad lands should intervene,
Nothing comes our souls between.

So I heard thy longing cry
Far away — yet I was near,
For my soul was standing by,
Very close beside thee, dear:
And my spirit looked in thine,
Knew'st thou not how near was mine?

THE BROOK

A JUNE PICTURE

DOWN the stony channel racing,
Sun and shadow swiftly chasing,
How the water foams and sparkles in its headlong haste to run!
Now beneath the bushes hiding,
Softly now through still pools gliding,
Flinging now its snowy foam-flakes upward toward the smiling sun.

Where the elm trees standing, greenly,
Bide both sun and storm serenely,
Leaning softly to each other, bough to bough in happy trance,
There the wild bird's love song, ringing,
Mingles with the streamlet's singing,
And the shadows flecked with sunlight seem to listen as they dance.

Running now in sunshine golden,
Over brown rocks worn and olden,

Like a child's laugh is its ripple, or a song by fairy sung;
Past the copse it trips unresting,
Where the hidden cat-bird, nesting,
Listens to the endless murmur, dreaming of her unborn young.

Now adown the steep rock leaping,
Now through shaded lakelet creeping,
Never resting in its journey to the stately river's side,
Soon with hesitating shiver
Down it leaps to meet the river,
And its life is joined forever to the turbid, flowing tide.

"AS TWO DEWDROPS ON A FLOWER"

AS two dewdrops on a flower
Rest apart and do not meet,
Till the happy, destined hour
When the west wind, cool and sweet,
Shakes the blossom; then they mingle,
Two in one forevermore;
Nature's self has not the power
To restore them as before,
Separate, divided, single.
So we met; divided, single
We had trod paths separate,
Knowing not, our lives converging
Finally should meet and mingle;
Knowing not that God, or Fate,
Nearer still our hearts was urging,
Till we met as river, river,
Met and mingled, one forever!
Think you we were led together
By God's hand through footpaths lonely,
Merely for a passing greeting,

Then again to coldly sever
And forget the blessed meeting?
Think you it was for that, only?
Nay, 't was for our lives' completeness
And we may not scorn the sweetness.
God mistakes not in His giving;
Well He knew our hearts' sore yearning,
Knew what covered fire was burning
Underneath our daily living;
Separated, and unknowing
That our hearts, though far, were one,
Sad, because our lives' sad flowing
Through the shadow seemed to run,
Till He led them in their going
Out from shade to joy and sun.
In each other's light we dwell
Weaving each the other's spell,
And we cannot say "Farewell."

PHANTOMS

OCTOBER'S splendor glorifies the trees,
Autumnal sunshine gilds the drowsy hours,
In the warm silence some belated bees
Hum fitfully around the lingering flowers.

Among the tree-tops in the sunny noon,
Plays sleepily the air amid the leaves;
Low in the west the pale, departing moon
Stands like the pallid ghost of summer eves.

Amid the beauty of the dying year
June, half forgot, seems dim, and far, and cold;
But when her roses flushed a hemisphere,
Her youthful blushes shamed October's gold.

We gather scarlet leaves and deem their glow
Outvies the green life of the summer's flush,
But hide it as we may, we always know
That life is sweeter than death's changeless hush.

Upon the far, blue mist pale phantoms rise,
Coming and fading as the shapes in dreams;
Friends looking out with dear, familiar eyes
Float in the blue and fill the noonday beams;

Friends who have crossed in sorrow long ago
That dim, veiled stream which has but one known shore,
Yet whose dark veil seems lifted now to show
Returning friends; but sorrowing friends no more.

Slowly the phantom forms grow dim and fade;
Slowly the spectres pass beyond my view;
Only the hills remain, in gold arrayed,
Range beyond range, melting to palest blue.

"WAS IT JUNE?"

WAS it June, was it rose-time, or winter and snow?
Was it noontide or moonlight? I never can know;
In my heart it was rose-time and sunshine and June,
The beauty of moonlight, the splendor of noon.
The birds, or my heart, filled with music the air,
The perfume of jasmine and lilies was there —
Or was it her breath, when she whispered to me
"I love you!" that seemed all this sweetness to be?
But moonlight or noonlight, or rose-time or snow,
Whichever it was, though I never can know,
Not noon can be brighter, not sweeter the rose,
Not softer the moonlight, not purer the snows,
Than the light which illumined the earth and my soul,
Than the fragrance which surely from Paradise stole,
When the soft whispered syllables thrilled on my ear,
And my heart ceased its beating to listen and hear.
Did the mocking-bird sing in the linden above
His passionate lyric of roses and love?
Or did my heart sing on that beautiful theme,
And was all my happiness only a dream?

If dreaming it was, let me sleep while I live,
For waking has nothing so precious to give;
Unfading the roses, unclouded the beam,
Unchanging the love which I dreamed in my dream.

"I CROSSED" . . .

. . . . . .

I CROSSED, I know not how, a wondrous sea,
Whose hither shore the sons of men call Earth,
And reached a fair, bright land, divinely still.
No sun was there, yet all the land was light;
No moon, nor stars; and the bright land was still.
I saw no man; yet did it seem to me
That unseen friends with tender, soothing hands
Caressed my weary brow, until the pain
Of Life and Living passed, and I was still.
Then through the silence — Did I wake, or dream? —
Came loving voices, bidding me to wait
For yet a little, when my opened eyes
Should see and know how God loves all the world.
Then, how it was I know not, but I seemed
To stand beside a slowly pulsing sea,
Whose waves, like quiet heart-beats, rose and fell,
And from their lulling motion came a sound
As soothing as the song a mother sings
To charm her dreaming child to deeper rest.
Such peaceful waters earth can never know.

I felt (although I know not if I dreamed),
That here alone could perfect rest be found.
The waves were rest. They were the Peace of Peace,
The perfect sweetness of God's perfect love.
In the blue mystery of distance, met
The azure sky and the soft, restful sea.
Oh, how I yearned to sink in those slow waves;
To clasp the water to me as a friend;
To feel its quiet enter in my heart,
For then I knew that I should learn for aye
The sacred meaning of divinest peace.
But something held me back. Expectant thought,
A dim, half knowledge of some wondrous thing
Even now approaching from that lovely sea,
Held me in waiting mood upon the shore,
Else surely I had laid me in the waves,
And filled my soul with rest, and love, and sleep.
Then, far out on the amethystine verge,
Floating with quiet motion toward the shore,
I saw a countless throng of sleeping men,
Women, and children; all in deepest sleep.
As they drew near the shore, adown the hills,
Whose soft, green slopes margined that pulsing sea,
A throng of men and women came, and stood
Along the beach, and softly drew to land
The sleeping ones. Then the warm, luminous air
Began to palpitate with strains of song,

So full of love and joy; so thrilling sweet,
My watching eyes were blinded with my tears.
Then slowly from profoundest slumber waked
The myriad sleepers; and a sound of joy,
A cry of gladness, filled the lucent sky,
As friend met friend, and heart to heart was pressed;
And the great throng departed up the hill.
But when I strove to join them, a white cloud,
Bright as the sunshine in a summer noon,
Shut all away from me; and naught was left
Save night, and stars, and murmuring of the wind.

FRIENDSHIP

SOME rooms there are within the human soul
Where we lock up old sorrows, pain and grief;
And if the world, by chance, be sweet and fair,
We break the key and never look again
Lest the bright sunshine of our life be dimmed.
But there is one fair room within the soul,
Kept ever swept and garnished; on whose walls
We hang our brightest picturings of truth,
Our aspirations and our sweetest hopes.
And this fair room is kept for that one friend,
Who comes, or late, or early. Only one,
And only once in life; changing the world
From gloom to glory. Tenderly the hand
Of that one friend is laid upon our heart,
Stilling its wild pulsations into peace.
Through life none other enters in this room,
'T is ever sacred to that friend of friends,
Whose heart meets ours with perfect sympathy;
Whose eye looks into ours and reads the soul
Like as a book whose open page is clear.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

DEAR God, I saw Thee not in that weak form,
Squalid, and shrinking from the driving storm;
Saw not Thy child in that poor man of sin,
The rags without disguised the soul within.

I spoke no word of comfort to his pain,
Coldly I threw my alms, nor looked again
To see his weary eyes raised unto mine:
Can it be true he is a child of Thine?

Then through the storm a strange, sad tone I caught;
Or was it a self-shaping of my thought?
And yet — through wind and rain I surely heard —
"Give thyself also; give me one kind word."

And when that word or thought smote on my brain
I quickly turned and faced the drifting rain,
If haply I once more the man might see
And give him alms more worthy him and Thee.

Too late ! I scanned with care the gloomy street
Through night and wind, through mingled rain and sleet,
Searched long, with grief, that I might bid him live;
I gave him alms; myself I did not give.

Lord, I have sought Thee when Thy day returns,
Where through the crimson pane the sunshine burns,
Where 'neath the minster's arch of sculptured stone,
Music makes for my sins melodious moan.

Now will I rather seek Thee in the street
Where driving storms of winter fiercely beat,
And if one soul from suffering I can free,
Wilt Thou not count it as a gift to Thee?

PARTED

YOU bade me leave you: then
I turned my face from hope and day,
Turned from the soul of life away,
And with a sorrow which would bide for aye,
Went blindly down the glen.

The moonlight was the same.
I noted one bright star that shone
Amid the moon's rays all alone:
One filmy cloud across her disk was blown
A wisp of silver flame.

The leaves were gently stirred
By a faint breeze which seemed in quest
Of fragrant flowers wherein to rest,
So close to earth its fluttering wings were pressed,
Like a sore wounded bird.

Across the shaded lawn
Thy lamp threw out a long, bright ray,
Which seemed to point my lonely way

Out into hopeless gloom, where I should stray,
Seeing no morning dawn.

O God, it was so dark!
Nor star nor moon could give me light;
My soul was lost in hopeless night,
Nor in the future could my grief-dimmed sight
One beam of comfort mark.

And still I walk alone.
And thy far casement, in my dreams
Is like a star that faintly beams,
But brings not light, for in its distant gleams
No ray of hope is thrown.

SONNETS

WAITING

HIGH in the heaven of heavens a silver star
Beats slowly to the music of the spheres.
I watch its pulsing through my unshed tears,
Because its beauty lifted up so far
I cannot reach; a strong, invisible bar
Shuts out the earthly one from its high place.
I worship from afar its infinite grace,
And when life's petty cares my spirit jar,
I raise my eyes and meet its changeless light
And feel my soul uplifted. Then I know,
Though æons pass in darkness, yet the night
At last shall vanish in the morning's glow,
And that fair star (whose name is Truth) shall be
My guide and comrade through eternity.

SUNSET

BENEATH the world's far edge the invisible sun
Hides from the watching eyes of weary men.
Dewy and cool, the breeze creeps through the glen;
The birds have dropped to silence one by one;
And the fair day, with all its duties done,
Rests softly in the arms of silent night.
Yet in the west rays of warm, delicate light
Still linger on the clouds, and upward run
To the blue zenith, where the white stars burn.
Unwillingly, and slowly like the day,
We journey down life's slope, and sadly turn,
Hoping in vain with youth's bright hours to stay.
Yet will unselfish deeds survive our breath,
And brighten long the starry night of death.

AT NIGHT

THE city lamps in long, converging lines
Shed through the streets a faint, unreal gleam;
The passers walk like phantoms of a dream,
Treading some vast aisle wrought with weird designs.
The trees beside the way are shadowy shrines,
And as they rustle in the yellow beam,
Low, prayer-like murmurs from the foliage stream
As if the city prayed. Above me shines
Arcturus, faint and pale. Like mortal love
Shining through mists of care, the dim lamps glow.
Our earthly love is quenched before we know,
By selfish cares, by griefs that come and go:
Not like the changeless stars that shine above,
Forever bright though dimmed by mists below.

A FOREST WALK

I

A SUNLESS day, gray clouds, a whispering breeze,
The shrill cicada and the clear-voiced thrush;
At intervals a silence, like the hush
Before the thunder; venerable trees,
A path from sunshine ever hidden; these
Make in my thought a picture. Down the way
We slowly walked that cloudy summer day,
And felt how Nature's quiet moods could please.
Above the cloistered walk great oak trees bent,
And in the shadow of their leafage we
Passed slowly on, and ever as we went,
Our busy thoughts on other days intent,
Forgot the present; or we wistfully
Peered forward, as if coming days to see.

II

How strong yet subtle is the sympathy
Between the heart and Nature. We are stirred
To the soul's depths by little things. A bird
Sings in the sunshine, and it seems as we
From out the sweet past caught the harmony
Of dear friends' voices. Some half-spoken word,
Or old song in the fading twilight heard,
Thrills through the soul and brings to memory
The time when life was like a summer day
Sunny and warm with hope's celestial ray.
And though such thoughts of early, happy hours
Pass quickly like a dream and will not stay,
One breath of fragrance from youth's phantom flowers
Is better worth than all life gives to-day.

DISTANT MOUNTAINS

I

THE nearer landscape lies in shade; the sky
Is white with silvery clouds, save far away
In the blue west where shines the cloudless day.
Beyond green hills and shadowy vales, where lie
The peaceful homes of men, my roving eye
Seeks the blue, sun-bright mountains. Purple mist
Tinges their tops with tender amethyst.
And as I gaze, in fancy I descry
Wild torrents leaping down their silent sides,
And seem to hear the murmur and the gush
Where those far waters vehemently rush
Through dusky dells where some white Undine hides.
A world of fancies and a home of dreams,
An earthly Eden that fair country seems.

II

On those far mountains, warm with noon's rich light,
  Softened, by leagues of summer haze, to blue,
  A lovely land comes slowly into view,
Such as youth dreams when life is flush and bright:
No place is there for sorrow or for night,
  But love's sweet flowers bloom forever new
  And fear not frost, nor lose their morning dew.
As memory throws its glamour on my sight,
  I see alone that land of hope and dreams —
Lone, sunny vales where fadeless flowers appear
  Like living gems; where silver rippling streams
  Pour down their waters; where the sunshine gleams,
And bird-songs fill the air, and mock the ear
With strains too sweet for common earth to hear.

THE PINE

I

WHERE slopes a lonely pasture towards the sky,
And frost-dried grasses shiver in the cold,
Stands a great pine tree, patient, sturdy, bold,
Holding his green top ever straight and high.
When gloomy skies and frost show winter nigh,
And other trees have spent their autumn gold,
All of his leafy wealth his branches hold,
Yielding it not, though tempests shrieking by,
Shake his stout trunk, and wildly toss his boughs.
But a low song of triumph and of power
Runs underneath the night-wind's mad carouse,
Sung by the smitten pine in his dark hour.
The night, the frost, the wind, are not so strong
As the lone tree; they cannot do him wrong.

II

And I would gladly sing in that high strain,
  Making my very pain to help me sing,
  And from the griefs of life a courage bring
To more than bear — to triumph in my pain.
The tree grows stronger as the hurricane
  Bows his green crown; when snows their burden fling
  Upon his top, his branches upward spring
Shaking the cold weight to the frozen plain.
  As he casts off the heavy, chilling snow,
Would I the burden of my sin throw down;
  As he sings proudly when the tempests blow,
  I too would sing, though life upon me frown.
Teach me, O pine! the secret of thy song,
That I, like thee, through evil may grow strong.

THE CROW

I

O WILD, free rover of the upper sky,
How small from that clear height must man appear!
Creeping on earth — his grave forever near —
With clouds and tears dimming his earth-bent eye.
Thou, lifted far above the earth, goest by,
Companioned by the friendly atmosphere;
Scanning the large horizon, blue and clear,
And seeing far pine forests darkly lie,
A cloud of green, moveless upon the hill.
There in the shelter of the sombre trees
With numberless companions thou wilt rest;
No sound to fright, but only the slow breeze
To sing and rock to sleep the forest's guest,
And with content his quiet hours to fill.

II

Would I could learn from cloud, and bird, and air,
From yellow sunshine, and from forest tree,
To live a larger life — more nobly free —
Too grand to feel the taint of selfish care.
Fain would I make my small horizon wide
And view the world as from some airy height,
Where early comes the morn and late the night;
Take wind, and cloud, and stars to be my guide
To some far, undiscovered shore of song,
And there, securely sheltered, ever bide,
And see the world's poor life beneath me glide,
And list to Nature's music, low and strong.
Then life would be no longer small and mean,
But large like Nature, and like Heaven serene.

INDIAN SUMMER

I

NEVER did days in far Pacific seas
Rest with more loving ministry of light,
Warmth, and delicious haze on gardens bright
With glow of tropical flowers and birds, than these
Which now caress December. In the lees
Of summer's wine lingers a magic might,
Bringing again June's sensuous delight,
Intoxicating air and birds and bees.
Through the dark pine flutters the drowsy air,
As if for rest after wide journeyings;
And the glad tree, holding his welcome guest
Lists to the tale of its long, fruitless quest
For sunnier lands in which to fold its wings;
And the tree murmurs answer, "None there are."

II

As a sweet strain of music dies away
  Trembling along some old cathedral's wall,
  Lifting the heart, as by a seraph's call,
Into a world lit by a purer ray,
Then ceases; while we seem to hear the play
  Of vibrant notes still down the warm air fall,
  Until the soul, half free from selfish thrall,
Feels as on earth it can no longer stay;
So the rich sunshine of the summer time
  Lingers in dying beauty on the hills
Until these days, when winter's hoary rime
  Is wont to crisp the flowers and check the rills.
And through the lucent sky we almost see
A path lead up to God's Eternity.

December 22, 1879.

TWILIGHT ON LAKE GEORGE

(Suggested by a Picture painted by Charles Lanman, Esq.)

I

A DREAM of twilight! On the lovely lake
The spendthrift sky scatters its wasting gold;
The glowing clouds in slender lines unrolled,
Reflected in the water, float and break
To points of ruddy flame. The ripples wake
Anear the shore, but vanish where the cold
Weird glooms of gorge and wooded hilltop fold
The water in deep slumber. Shadows take
Their stealthy way across the fading light.
Above the motionless trees, against the sky,
A flock of waterfowl make rapid flight,
Seen for a moment as they hurry by.
And evening dropping like a child to rest
Sleeps peacefully upon Night's quiet breast.

II

Peace comes with evening. When we stand alone,
Watching the far-off hills where sunset glows,
And see the day draw softly to a close,
Or listen to the waves' low monotone,
We do not need companionship; for none
Can speak as truly to the heart as those
Great mountains paling down from gold to rose;
Or the slow waves that break and seem to moan.
Then comes upon the heart divinest peace,
From groveling thought the soul finds glad release,
And doubt and fear and selfish sorrow cease:
Then petty cares and troubles disappear,
And life's vexed questions find an answer clear;
For Man is far away and God is near.

"I STAND UPON THE HILL: FAR, FAR AWAY"

I STAND upon the hill: far, far away
A burst of sunshine flies along the plain,
From where the winds have broadly rent in twain
The gloomy veil of autumn's clouds of gray;
Still speeding on, the brightness will not stay;
Pursuing shadows sweep their sombre train
Across the splendor; as I look again
The far blue mountains catch the fleeting ray
A moment, then the glory vanishes.
So passes youth's short sweetness. When its years
Are full of strength, the clouds of life are rent
And the broad sun of passion warmly lies
Upon the heart; but soon come doubts and fears,
And age clouds youth's clear sky, and love is spent.

PROGRESS

AS the blue splendor of the cloudless sky
To earthly dust owes its transcendent hue,
The myriad myriad motes reflecting blue
To the fair earth beneath, while hidden lie
The spectrum's other glories; so, will I
Think, that humanity to God's far view
Shows nobler aspirations than seem true
To us anear. The shadows we descry,
But He may see that, spite of shame and sin,
The world shows more of noble life than mean;
And the slow centuries that gather in
The ripened sheaves of progress, still may glean
At each succeeding harvest, souls more pure,
Nobler in thought and deed, to Truth yet truer.

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